

The search
for meaning

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The INQUIRER^{85p}

the voice of British and Irish Unitarians
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An expanding halo of light around a distant star, V838 Monocerotis. The illumination of interstellar dust comes from the red supergiant star at the middle of the image. Mon is located about 20,000 light-years away from Earth, placing the star at the outer edge of our Milky Way galaxy. Photo by NASA and The Hubble Heritage Team (AURA/STScI)

Our purpose is to search for meaning

Religious practice teaches us to deal with our circumstances, whatever they may be, and opens us up to the possibility of being surprised by life says

Maud Robinson

Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl is a book, small in size, but huge in importance. It has been named one of the 10 most important books of the 20th century, and has profoundly changed peoples' lives. It is a short and gripping book, which can be read in one sitting. It tells of Frankl's experiences as a concentration camp inmate during World War II, focusing on how inmates responded to the horrors that were inflicted on them. Frankl suggests that these observations tell us much about how all human beings respond in all situations.

Frankl was born in Vienna in 1905 into a Jewish family, and was working as a psychiatrist at the outset of World War II. From 1942 until 1945 he was incarcerated in a series of con-

centration camps, as were his wife and his parents. His wife and his parents died in the camps. Frankl himself survived. During his time in the camps, and partly because of his suffering there, Frankl formulated a revolutionary approach to psychotherapy known as *Logotherapy*, which has been called the 'Third Viennese School' (after Freud's Psychoanalysis and Adler's Individual Psychology.)

What life expects of us

At the core of *Logotherapy* is the belief that man's primary motivational force is search for meaning – finding personal meaning in life, however dismal the circumstances may be.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote, 'He who has a "why" to live can bear almost any "how".' This, Viktor Frankl discovered to be true, even amidst the horrors of the concentrations camps.

However, Frankl suggests that the 'why' of life is rarely provided by a religious idea of purpose, no matter what devout religious adherents may claim.

He doesn't *deny the possibility* of Ultimate Meaning, but the important point he makes is that:

- The meaning of life cannot be defined generally;
- Each person, in their own specific circumstances,

All life experience is relative

has to find their own meaning in life.

And the meaning in life is usually to be found not in what we expect of life but rather in what life expects of us.

In the camps, Frankl had contact with two would-be suicides. They talked about ending their own lives; they had nothing to live for. But fellow prisoners were able to talk them round by reasoning with them that something was expected of them in the future. For one of them it was his child who was waiting for him in another country, for the other, a scientist, it was a book that he had yet to finish writing.

What about 'Ultimate Meaning'?

Frankl's book highlights an important fact, which we have great difficulty in learning – that all experience is relative. Happiness and suffering; poverty and riches – how we experience each of these things is relative.

In the midst of terrible suffering the tiniest boon can be the cause of truly deep happiness, and in just the same way we become satiated with the good life, of having too much, so none of it satisfies us any longer. We all know this – although we forget it so easily – 'what begins as a privilege soon becomes an expectation.'

It's part of the human condition that we feel perpetually unsatisfied – human desire knows no satiety. But, we can work within our condition; we can be aware of our constant desire for more. Happiness comes from what *is*; it comes from constant alertness and mindfulness of the small details that bless our lives.

In *Man's Search for Meaning* Frankl suggests that we derive meaning in our lives, our relationship with our work, or the people we love, or failing that, through our relationship to unavoidable suffering. So, what more does Viktor Frankl's later book – *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* have to teach us?

What is 'Ultimate Meaning'? And how does searching for Ultimate Meaning differ from searching for meaning?

I can only give a few pointers to Frankl's main ideas which perhaps will whet some people's appetites to explore this important work more deeply.

Frankl's main thesis in *Man's Search for Ultimate Meaning* is that there is a religious sense deeply rooted in each and every man's unconscious depths, whether or not we choose to examine and explore that religious sense or impulse. Furthermore for those who do choose to explore their religious impulses it must be accepted that our symbols for Ultimate Meaning only point to a reality that we cannot experience directly.

Taking responsibility for existence

Frankl suggests that, in the human, instinct and spirit are incommensurable; they have no standard of comparison and that the real criterion of authentically human existence derives from discerning whether a phenomenon is spiritual or instinctual. Being fully human consists in – 'not being driven' but 'deciding what one is going to be'. Being human is being responsible for one's own existence. To be fully human we must take responsibility for our own existence, however Frankl argues that: Human Existence, in its depth, is essentially unconscious; that: the self does not yield to total self-reflection. He quotes Schiller as saying, 'As soon as the soul starts talking, it is no longer the soul that is talking.' Frankl insists that 'Where spirit is fully itself it is unconscious of itself.'

So, how can we take responsibility for what is essentially unconscious? Frankl suggests that where Spirit is unconscious of itself, this is where Conscience, Love and Art occur.

He argues that conscience is essentially intuitive – that it is not based on generalities, but is very specific. Conscience is the unique possibility a concrete person has to actualise in a specific situation. Frankl suggests that only conscience is capable of adjusting the 'eternal' generally agreed-upon moral law to the specific situation in which a concrete person is engaged, and in this respect, conscience is analogous to love and also to art.

Love reveals potentialities dormant in the loved person that he still has to make real – love alone enables the loving person to grasp the uniqueness of the loved person.

Aesthetics also have their foundation within the spiritual unconscious, according to Frankl. He suggests that the non-rational intuition of conscience is paralleled by the inspiration of the artist, and he states that clinicians observe time and again that excessive reflection on the creative process proves to be harmful to the process.

The phenomena of conscience, love and art occur where the 'spiritual self' steep itself in its unconscious depths.

Taking conscience as his model for 'the spiritual unconscious,' Frankl says that the goal of psychotherapy is not to make things conscious at any price. Psychotherapy has to bring the unconscious – including the spiritual unconscious – to consciousness, only in order to allow it finally to recede back into unconsciousness – to reinstate the spontaneity of an unreflected existential act.

Conscience is a non-rational intuition

He suggests that in order to explain man's being responsible for how he 'is' in the world, the transcendent quality of conscience must be considered. He considers that conscience can only be really understood with reference to transcendence. An irreligious man, he suggests, is one who doesn't recognize this transcendent quality of conscience. The irreligious man 'has' a conscience, and he is also responsible; he simply asks no further – neither what he is responsible to, nor from what his conscience stems. The irreligious man considers conscience to be the ultimate 'to what' he is responsible.

However, conscience is not the last 'to what' that men are responsible to, but the next to last. Frankl suggests that on his way to find the ultimate meaning of life, the irreligious man has not reached the highest peak, but rather has stopped at the next to highest. And what is the reason that the irreligious man does not go further? It is because he does not want to lose the 'firm ground under his feet.' The true summit is barred from his vision; it is hidden in the fog, and he does not risk venturing into it, into this uncertainty. Only the religious man hazards it.

Among those who do not risk venturing into the uncertainty of what underlies conscience, and have committed themselves to an atheistic or agnostic worldview, there are some who are ready to accept the concept of transcendence, but do not feel that this necessitates that they speak of 'God.' There are others who do not see any reason why not to denote transcendence by the age-old word 'God.'

Frankl insists that there can be no psychological answer to the question of the origin of conscience, only an answer which

(Continued on page 5)

The INQUIRER

THE UNITARIAN AND FREE CHRISTIAN PAPER

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The Inquirer is the oldest

Nonconformist religious newspaper

"To promote a free and inquiring religion through the worship of God and the celebration of life; the service of humanity and respect for all creation; and the upholding of the liberal Christian tradition."

From the Object passed at the General Assembly of the Unitarian and Free Christian Churches 2001

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Prevent discrimination

Unitarians have expressed concerns that some religious groups, that seek to take over public services particularly at local level, could pursue policies and practices that result in increased discrimination against marginalised groups, particularly in service provision and the employment of staff.

In a submission to the Public Administration Select Committee Inquiry into the government's proposals for the 'Big Society' the Unitarian commitment to social involvement and justice has been emphasised. Unitarians were one of the few faith groups that responded to the call for evidence.

Speaking about the submission, Chief Officer Derek McAuley said, 'Often public policy in different arenas is not joined up and can interact in unforeseen ways. I welcome increased community involvement in social action by faith groups; it has always been the hallmark of Unitarians as individuals and as communities.'

'Yet encouraging some faith groups to takeover service provision from statutory agencies runs the risk that Government policies on equality, diversity and inclusion might be diluted. The British Humanist Association and the recent Liberal Democrat Spring Conference have raised similar concerns.'

A particular problem may be that staff, especially in senior positions, transferred by Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) or TUPE regulations. According to Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), 'The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) protects employees' terms and conditions of employment when a business is transferred from one owner to another.'

'It is possible, though, that transferred employees may then find that their new employer attempts to impose faith requirements as a 'genuine occupational requirement', under the Equality Act. This could affect those of particular faiths or none or those who do not conform to the traditional ethos of the faith group, such as gay, lesbian or transgendered people.'

The Unitarian Chief Officer's submission sets out a Unitarian perspective on the 'Big Society' emphasising the motivations underpinning social involvement and the role of the faith groups which are often the only institution active in some deprived communities.

'In the 19th century, Unitarians in many places took the lead in seeking to improve the conditions under which the mass of the people both lived and worked. Their names still resonate down to us today; Florence Nightingale, John Fielden, John Pounds, Mary Carpenter and William Rathbone to name but a few. In recent years, Unitarians remain active in social affairs, in promoting human rights and fighting discrimination.'

The submission emphasises that cuts and reductions in national and local government spending could impact adversely on the most marginalised sections of our community; such as the poor, travellers and asylum-seekers. If statutory services are further squeezed it should not be taken for granted that the churches and other voluntary agencies can pick up the pieces. In applauding volunteers' initiatives as part of the 'Big Society' we point out that volunteers are not 'free'; to be truly effective they need professional support which has a real financial cost to the provider organisation.

The full submission can be found on: www.publications.parliament.uk/

The submission was featured in Third Sector and in Third Sector Online, the magazine of the Britain's voluntary and community sector: <http://thirdsector.co.uk/>

— Derek McAuley

With thanks

The colour cover on this issue of *The Inquirer* was sponsored by the Eastern Union of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches. See details of the celebration of the newly refurbished Framlingham Meeting House on page 11.

Inquiring Words

The Womb of Stars

The womb of stars embraces us; remnants of their fiery furnaces pulse through our veins.

We are of the stars, the dust of explosions cast across space.

We are of the earth: we breathe and live in the breath of ancient plants and beasts.

Their cells nourish the soil; we build our communities on their harvest of gifts.

Our fingers trace the curves carved in clay and stone by forebears unknown to us.

We are a part of the great circle of humanity gathered around the fire, the hearth, the altar.

We gather anew this day to celebrate our common heritage.

May we recall in gratitude all that has given us birth.

—Joy Atkinson

Our purpose is to search for meaning

(Continued from page 3)

has to do with the very nature of existence – that has to do with transcendence or Ultimate Reality. Frankl suggests that there is ‘a latent relation to transcendence inherent in man’, and that ‘this unconscious relation to transcendence or God is profoundly personal.’

The angel and the demon

Jung had argued that unconscious religiousness remains more or less instinctual. Frankl counters ‘I would not give a damn for a religiousness that I owed to some “religious drive.”’ He continues, ‘Genuine religiousness has not the character of drivenness but rather that of ‘deciding-ness’. The transcendent unconscious belongs to ‘spiritual existence’ rather than ‘psychophysical facticity’ and repressed transcendence shows up and makes itself noticeable as an ‘unrest of the heart.’ Repression winds up in neurosis. Once the angel in us is repressed, he turns into a demon.

What is the relation of all this theological exploration for Frankl’s primary focus in psychiatry? Frankl insists that genuine religiousness – which is decided and not driven – must unfold in its own time and that although religion might *secondarily* promote things such as mental health and inner equilibrium, the aim of religion is not primarily to do with psychological solutions; the aim of religion is primarily concerned with spiritual salvation. (This, of course opens up a whole new can of worms, what do we mean by the term spiritual salvation?)

Frankl suggests that ‘religion is not an insurance policy for a tranquil life, or to provide maximum freedom from conflicts.’ He insists that religion provides man with more than psychotherapy ever could – but it also demands more of him.

And returning to the starting point for all of this exploration – the question of why we gather together for spiritual practice and contemplation of the nature of the divine, Frankl reminds us that: ‘Our symbols for Ultimate Meaning only point to a reality we cannot experience directly.’ The purpose of religious practice is not to make truth claims about the existence, or otherwise, of some kind of super-being, it is to teach us to deal with our circumstances, whatever they may be; to open us up to the possibility of being surprised by life; and never taking anything for granted.

Frankl suggests that: the ‘why’ of life is rarely provided by a religious idea of purpose, however he also asserts that ‘meaning in life is usually to be found not in what we expect of life but rather in what life expects of us.

And what does life expect of us? To find out we must look inward at our own lives, and remember that the function of religion is to make us aware of what *is* right now, in any moment; to be aware that poverty and riches are primarily of the spirit and to know that we will never find happiness through chasing our desires. We always have choices to make, no matter what our circumstances, but we must consciously step up and make those choices, if we are to go any way towards fulfilling what life expects of us.

The Rev Maud Robinson is minister at St Mark’s, Edinburgh.

Stand up for justice and churches

Tell the government: Civil Partnerships should be allowed on religious premises. Marriage comes next.

The deadline for responses to the Government's consultation paper on civil partnerships on religious premises is 23 June and I would urge any congregation or individual wishing to respond to do so by this date. It is important, even at this stage in the legislative process, for our views to be heard. I shall be submitting a response on behalf of the General Assembly based on our agreed position and general principles of freedom and equality but others will be most welcome.

I had the opportunity to meet with the civil servant conducting the consultation and we talked about the need to ensure that any proposals are practical and can be easily implemented. I indicated that I thought the cost of registration of £1500 for three years was excessive and that the comparison with secular commercial venues was invidious. We do not have the option of recouping the fee from sales of food and alcohol! Indicating the reality of finance for congregations may be useful in this debate.

I have recently also spoken to Stonewall, the organisation that worked closely with Lord Alli to secure the amendment to the Equality Bill to permit religious premises to be registered for civil partnerships. The support that we, with the Quakers and Liberal Jews, gave to the amendment proved very persuasive to parliamentarians in the free votes on this measure. Hopefully my views will influence their response.

We must ensure that this measure is implemented in a way that is effective and practical for our congregations. It is hoped that registrations can begin later this year.



Norwegian MP May Hansen, celebrates the 2008 vote on the same-sex marriage bill outside of the Parliament of Norway. Photo by Marius Talmo

The consultation paper can be found here: <http://bit.ly/hLBNxC> or www.equalities.gov.uk/equality_act_2010/civil_partnership_consultation.aspx

– Derek McAuley, Chief Officer, General Assembly of Unitarian and Free Christian Churches

Consultation on marriage equality next

By Lynne Featherstone MP

'As the Minister for Equalities I am proud that this Government is committed to ensuring fair treatment and equality of opportunity for everyone – including for lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people – and to ensuring freedom of religion or belief for all people. That's why earlier this year we announced our intention to remove the ban in England and Wales on civil partnerships being registered on religious premises. The changes will be made by bringing into force section 202 of the Equality Act 2010 and we are currently consulting on the practical arrangements needed to implement this provision.

'I believe this is an important and positive step forward both for same-sex couples and for religious freedom. It will give same-sex couples, for the first time, the chance to register their civil partnership in a religious setting and give those religious organisations who wish to accommodate civil partnerships the opportunity to do so.

'The provision is entirely voluntary – there is no obligation on faith groups to host civil partnership registrations unless they want to do so. And the legislation in the Equality Act 2010 makes this crystal clear.

'This consultation document deals only with this specific measure and does not set out proposals for any other changes

to civil partnerships or any changes to marriage. However, over the past few months I've spoken to a lot of LGB and T people and faith groups and it quickly became clear that there is a desire from many to move further towards equal civil marriage and partnerships. We will be consulting separately on how legislation can develop, working with all those who have an interest in this area.

'It was greatly encouraging to read Derek McAuley's statement in support of our consultation. I would encourage as many as possible to respond to our consultation which closes on 23 June.'

The full document and response form can be found at www.equalities.gov.uk or you can request a copy by emailing: civilpartnerships@geo.gsi.gov.uk

– Lynne Featherstone MP is Minister for Equalities



Lynne Featherstone MP

EC searches for another member

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING 13 MAY 2011
KEY MESSAGES

1. Resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby

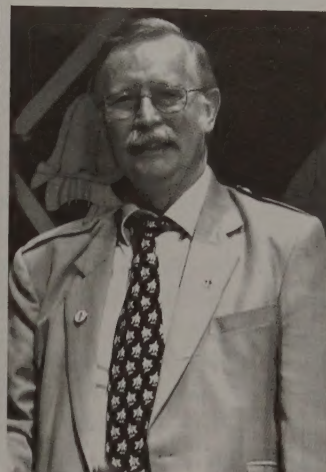
The resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby from the Executive Committee, following his election as Mayor of Leicester, was received with regret. Peter was thanked for his contribution to the work of the Executive Committee since its establishment, including a lengthy period as Convenor. It was agreed to institute a process for the co-option of new Executive Committee member in July 2011.

2. Strategic Priorities

The meeting considered the feedback received at the Annual Meetings to the presentation of the Strategic Priorities and agreed a process for the appointment of strategic group leaders and recruitment of group members by mid-June 2011.

3. Ministerial Students Fund

The current and likely future demands upon the Ministerial Students Fund were considered and it was agreed to encourage current and new supporters – congregations, districts and individuals – to make contributions to build



Robert Ince and John Clifford recently joined the Executive Committee of the General Assembly. Photos by Giles Croucher

up the Fund. The Ministerial Fellowship was thanked for its generous donation of £5,000.

4. Appointment of Convenor

Rev Martin Whitell was appointed as Executive Committee Convenor for the forthcoming year.

5. New Members

The two new members of the Executive Committee – Rev John Clifford and Mr Robert Ince – participated in their first meeting and completed their induction.

CO-OPTION OF MEMBER OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The Executive Committee is seeking applications for a co-opted member to fill the vacant position following the resignation of Sir Peter Soulsby. The co-opted member will serve from July 2011 until after the Annual Meetings in 2013. The same criteria for an election nomination process will apply.

Applications are sought from Full, Honorary and Associate Members of the General Assembly and quota-paying members of constituent congregations. Skills and knowledge required are in the areas of:

- Leadership
- Strategy development
- Communications
- Decision making
- Representation
- Financial awareness
- Team working

Confidentiality, where necessary, about Executive Committee business is a general requirement.

In addition candidates should:

- Demonstrate 3 years active commitment to the Unitarian community
- Be in sympathy with the Objects of the General Assembly

They should not be:

- A student in training for the Unitarian ministry
- A close family member of anyone employed by the General Assembly

Applicants should submit a one page cv to Derek McAuley, General Assembly Chief Officer at dmcauley@unitarian.org.uk setting out how their experience and skills are relevant to the post. Applications must be received by 8 July 2011 to enable consideration by the Executive Committee at its meeting on 15/16 July 2011. For further information about the role please contact Derek McAuley on 020 7240 2384.

Dreaming of faith and of frogs

By Danny Crosby

Three frogs were happily sitting on a leaf. Suddenly one of the frogs decided to jump off the leaf.

How many frogs were left sitting on the leaf?

The usual answer is two, but is this true? Did the frog leap off the leaf? We don't know. We are not told. All that we are told is that the frog made a decision to leap off the leaf, not that it actually did so. I love this illustration, it speaks to me. It teaches me that whatever we may say, think or even believe means very little unless it is followed by appropriate action, unless we act in faith.

Last year I enjoyed reading all the different 'This I Believe' statements in *The Inquirer*. We truly are a broad church. For the past few months I've been asking myself what I believe. I sometimes wonder what the good folk in Altrincham and Urmston think about what I believe. They themselves pretty much represent the whole Unitarian spectrum. I am both pleased and relieved to discover this.

What I claim to believe, about many things, has of course changed over the years, as it does for most folk. To be honest I am becoming increasingly frustrated with the whole concept of belief and disbelief. Such statements as 'This I believe' or 'This I don't believe' just sound so limiting. They build barriers. They lack both humility and openness, which Forrest Church describes as the keys to religious living.

I have, during my time at Altrincham and Urmston, loved exploring Forrest Church's writing, particularly when he has described how pastoral ministry has informed his own faith. Throughout his book *The Cathedral of the World* he returns to this theme while describing how his own personal faith journey has continued to flow.

A friend of mine recently posted on Facebook 'If you don't plan your plan, it remains a dream'. Interesting, I thought, and replied 'Live it', which I'm sure sounded a little baffling at the time. What I meant was live the plan, live the dream. We can dream and plan as much as we want, but unless we actually put that into action, it means very little. My friend is a person of action, a person of faith who keeps putting her head above the parapet, despite life's knockbacks and disappointments. I'm not sure she always sees herself that way, but it's how she lives her life.

For me the difference between belief and faith is the action. Belief is the plan and the dream, where as faith is putting that into action. Belief informs a decision, which is meaningless unless it is followed up with faithful action. By the way my dictionary disagrees with me. It says 'Belief is essentially the acceptance that something is true without the need for proof.' And 'faith is a strong belief or confidence in someone or something; or it is a strong belief in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual conviction rather than proof.'

My dictionary defines belief and faith similarly and yet I



Two frogs on a leaf. But did the third jump off? Photo by Anna Hunter

experience them differently. Faith is a fluid where as belief is static and rigid; faith is active, it is a way of living, where as belief is a mental construction which I see as a possession, which can never be proved perfectly. Faith is a way of knowing, a dynamic process that gives order and coherence to life. It is a crucial life giving as well as sustaining force, in action, that is forever changing and expanding. Faith in its Greek and Latin roots speaks of trust and commitment. Faith is not a place or status to be attained or a stage to be realised. It is a way of being, moving and transforming. Faith cannot be owned or possessed; therefore it can never be lost or taken away. Whenever I feel that my faith is waning I have discovered that all I have to do is to begin acting in faith once more and I begin to experience it again. Instantly! I never stay stuck on my leaf for very long.

Belief seems so limiting, whereas faith, I have discovered, is incredibly liberating. Faith, or do I mean 'faithing', reaches way beyond beliefs or concepts. It is an experience that involves relationships among ourselves, others, our world and that which is greater than all and yet present in each. Faith is our relationship with life itself and whatever we experience at the core of it all. Faith is so much more than a mental construction or even a decision; it is an active living experience. It's more than that though; in my experience living faithfully is also transformative. Well it changed me and my life.

I believe in faith.

I am going to end this little piece with a story I keep hearing and re-hearing from the life of Nils Bohr. It beautifully portrays the difference between belief and faith.

An American scientist once visited the offices of the great Nobel Prize winning physicist, Nils Bohr, in Copenhagen. He was amazed to find that over Bohr's desk was a horseshoe, securely nailed to the wall, with the open end up in the approved manner (so it would catch the good luck and not let it spill out). The American said with a nervous laugh,

'Surely you don't believe the horseshoe will bring you good luck, do you, Professor Bohr? After all, as a scientist --'

Bohr chuckled. 'I believe no such thing, my good friend. Not at all. I am scarcely likely to believe in such foolish nonsense. However, I am told that a horseshoe will bring you good luck whether you believe in it or not.'

How many frogs were left sitting on that leaf?

The Rev Danny Crosby is minister at Altrincham and Urmston.

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UUA minister visits London district

By Jim Corrigan

The Rev Victoria Weinstein, an American Unitarian Universalist Minister who is coming to Britain in July to lead workshops for the London District, will be holding a 'Conversation with Unitarian Christians' at Golders Green Unitarians (in north London) at 7.15pm on Monday, 11 July. All are welcome. Victoria is a parish minister in Massachusetts and she teaches a popular course on liturgy at Andover Newton Theological School near Boston. She is a leading figure in the Unitarian Universalist Christian Fellowship.

Victoria has suggested the Conversation could focus on: how we nurture our spiritual lives as Christians within the Unitarian church; serving a Unitarian church when one has a fairly high Christology; and how to lead Bible study with Unitarians.

Victoria has written: 'Who is Jesus Christ to me? He is both a teacher of the Way, and the Way itself. For one who has always had a hard time grasping the concept of God ... Jesus both points me toward a definition of God and then lives that definition ... Jesus is my soul's safety from all harm. He is the avatar of aloneness, a compassionate and unsentimental narrator of the soul's exile on earth, and proof of the soul's triumphant homecoming at the end of the incarnational struggle ...

'I call myself a Christian because I am a disciple of Jesus Christ—not just Jesus-that-great-guy-and-teacher-with-the-long-hair-and-sandals but Jesus the living avatar of the great God and Jesus the Christ of Easter morning ...'

This essentially mystical approach to Jesus is shared by several leading UU Christians – as well as by many Hindus and Buddhists. It could also be a trend among Christians in our

Donald Dunkley, minister and social worker, 1935 – 2011

Donald Dunkley, who has died just a few days short of his 76th birthday, trained at Unitarian College in the late 1950s and had a brief ministry at Buxton with Great Hucklow, before transferring to a career in social work.

He is remembered as a pacifist, humanist, artist, cyclist, work-camp organiser and charismatic presence on the youth scene, notably in the Unitarian Young People's League and the International Religious Fellowship.

A number of friends from that time, including Ann Peart, President of the General Assembly, attended his funeral service at Blackley Crematorium, Manchester.

As a boy he had joined the (now closed) Platt Chapel, where his father played the organ and his mother sang in the choir. In later life he initiated the placement of a Blue Plaque on this late 17th-century building.

He married twice and leaves two children, Kate and Richard, a granddaughter Isla, a sister Ann, and Margaret, his partner of his last ten years.

– John Midgley and Ernest Baker



diverse denomination in the UK, but perhaps difficult to acknowledge for fear of being labelled 'not Unitarian'.

The event is organised by the London District Liberal Christian Affinity Group. Golders Green Unitarians, 31 ½ Hoop Lane, London NW11 8BS. The church is 5 mins walk from Golders Green tube station (Northern line, Edgware branch). For directions see: www.ggu.org.uk

Jim Corrigan co-convenes the London District Liberal Christian group.

Victoria Weinstein will address other groups around London, including:

Sunday, 17th July – 'Moving Through the Liturgy' This will take place at Roslyn Hill Chapel, Hampstead from 2.30 – 5.30pm, with the participants then leading the evening service at 7.00pm. An evening meal will be shared between the workshop and the service.

Saturday, 23rd July – 'Nurturing a Ministry of Activism', 1 – 5pm at Unity Church, Islington. This workshop will address the challenge of involving congregational members in the work of social activism.

Monday 25th – Wednesday 27th July – 'Moving through the Liturgy: A Workshop for Worship Renewal' at The Emmaus Centre, West Wickham, Kent. This workshop will explore the minister's roles as teacher of tradition, mediator between the sacred and the mundane, and manager of communal energy.

For more information, contact the Rev David Usher, London District minister at davidusher@ldpa.org.uk

New Fellowship in Poole Area

Members of the Southern Unitarian Association, knowing that the Bournemouth church has closed down, (though we don't know how many members may still meet socially) are keen to start a new Fellowship in the Poole area. Please would anyone who is within reasonable distance of Poole and would be interested in being involved let me know either on email (brenda.knopf@btinternet.com) or telephone 02380 555333 or write to: 4 Church Lane, Highfield, Southampton SO171SZ. Of course we would be delighted to see any from Bournemouth who could join us.

– Brenda Knopf

General Assembly Weekend and Community Appeal 2011

General Assembly Weekend this year is 25-26 June and provides an opportunity to celebrate our National Unitarian Movement and the ties that bind us together.

The Worship Panel has prepared a pack for use by Worship Leaders, "Being Connected", which is available on the national web site at:

www.unitarian.org.uk/pdfs/Being_Connected.pdf

The Community Appeal is a way for congregations and individuals to financially support the work of the General Assembly and ensure we have the resources to fund future development of ministry, local leadership and greater visibility which are essential to underpin congregational growth. All donations are doubled due to the generosity of the Bowland Trust and with Gift Aid (if appropriate) is a most effective way of giving.

– Derek McAuley, Chief Officer

Letters to the Editor

We British are prisoners in our own land

To the Editor:

Re 'Stop Faith-based discrimination',
Inquirer 28 May

The fact that one hesitated for so long before deciding to respond to Stephen Lingwood's piece, illustrates the extent to which we have become prisoners in our own land. We have been brainwashed for so long by political-speak of the 'multi-cultural society' that too many of us are afraid to speak our mind lest we are accused of being racist. For far too long Britain has been obsessed with leaning over backwards to accommodate immigrants to the country and I suggest that this is quite the wrong way round. From time immemorial, immigrants to any land knew that if they are to be accepted and welcomed as contributors to that Society, then they have to learn to fit in with its customs and practices and not seek to impose those from the land which they have left. This is Britain; we speak English; we have essentially been a Christian country for hundreds of years. Every immigrant should learn to respect that and I suspect that most would but for the confused thinking of Local Authorities terrified of contravening Race Legislation, who responded by changing our ways, printing their guidance leaflets in foreign languages and indulging in such crazy practices as displaying 'Winter Lights' at Christmas.

Leaders of immigrant communities recognise how divisive this is and deplore such stupidity. We also have a long tradition of religious and racial tolerance, but this must be a two way affair. Stephen deplores the attempt to ban the wearing of a full veil by women as a restriction of freedom, but this is a cultural tradition and not a religious practice, and it is totally alien to British practice. And so are arranged marriages and the subjugation of women. Likewise, the persecution of an air hostess for wearing a cross or boarding house owners who ban homosexuals because they believe that the practice is inherently wrong, is a totally unwarrantable transgression of their civil rights.

Tolerance is fine, but whatever happened to common sense? I believe that the vast majority of the citizens of this country, whilst firmly rejecting racial bigotry,

would support this view and that they would welcome the long overdue reassertion of the traditions which made this country great.

Sandy Ellis

Droitwich

Bags needed a better Unitarian message

To the Editor:

Great idea to give us all environmentally friendly hessian bags at the Swansea GA Annual Meetings. And thanks to David Edwards – Insurance Broker for sponsoring this. David Edwards is canny enough to make sure that people know what he does when they see the bag. But what are my fellow shoppers to make of the Unitarian information on the bag? Not much. The unwieldy title circumnavigating a chalice is difficult to read, doesn't say where the organisation is based, and gives hardly a clue as to what it stands for. It could – at the very least – have given the web address.

If this is the start of 'raising the visibility of the Unitarian movement' then we have a long way to go and it begs the important question – what do we want to make visible?

Great bag – useless information to the uninformed in the supermarket.

David Dawson

Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Could you help 'Send a Child to Hucklow'?

To the Editor:

The 'Send a Child to Hucklow' Fund (SACH) will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2011-12. For 50 years, the fund has been providing holidays for under-privileged children and supporting the Nightingale Unitarian Conference Centre at Great Hucklow. The size of the undertaking and the cost of providing holidays have increased over the years – from a few pounds in the first year to £58,000 last year.

Our chairman, the Rev Peter Godfrey, who was one of the founders of the fund has secured an agreement that the money we raise during our 50th year will be matched – up to £50,000. Obviously, we are going to do all we can to raise at least £50,000.

We think it will be possible to raise £50,000. In addition to the generous gifts from individuals, churches, district

associations, Women's League groups and special events, there are numerous trusts and organisations which give grants to support the type of work undertaken by the fund. The trustees are a small group of individuals who will be doing what they can to promote the Send a Child to Hucklow Fund and raise money.

However, we are looking for help from an individual who supports our aims and has the time, skill and enthusiasm to spearhead our fundraising efforts for the year. May I ask, through *The Inquirer* whether anyone would like to coordinate our special appeal?

The task will involve writing to numerous trusts and grant-giving bodies and asking them for donations. Of those that do reply, many ask for application forms to be completed before they will even consider giving us money. This can be time-consuming and frustrating, but ultimately rewarding. If 25 trusts give us £1,000 each, then combined with our regular donations, we will meet our target. If you are the person we are looking for, please contact me.

Thank you in advance for your support. We will keep you informed of progress through *The Inquirer* over the course of the year.

David Ogden

Treasurer, SACH

Email: Honorary_Treasurer@sendachildtohucklow.org.uk

Inquirer letters policy

Letters should be succinct. It is preferable that they are sent by email to inquirer@btinternet.com. Typewritten or legible handwritten submissions may be sent to the editor at 46A Newmarket Road, Cringleford, Norwich NR4 6UF.

Letters should be signed with the writer's full name and, if applicable, the name of the group or congregation with which the writer is affiliated. A postal address and telephone number are required, for verification purposes.

Letters will be edited for length and content and may appear in an excerpted form. Any affiliations listed with letter writers' names are for identification purposes only, and should not suggest the view expressed is representative of that body.

Framlingham Meeting House re-opens



Following a long and painful gestation and labour, the Trustees and congregation of Framlingham Meeting House are pleased to announce the successful birth of their refurbished Meeting House!

Over many years there had been discussions about improving the kitchen, providing an accessible toilet for people with disabilities, having better heating, etc. Some improvements had happened – a ‘blocked in’ door had been opened up and replaced to improve access and a rotten window had been replaced. But money for further improvement was largely locked up in old Trusts linked to the clearly, rapidly non-viable Bedfield Chapel. And, somehow, everyone involved in the two chapels was locked into detail and no-one could see the wood for trees!

And then there was light! The Charity Commission began to encourage small trusts operating similar charities to merge; there was no longer any question of keeping Bedfield Chapel open – the congregation had dwindled to one, and Framling-



ham Meeting House was only six miles down the road. And Sheila Seal had a vision! Put aside the detail, put aside questions of cost and draw up a ‘wish list’, include everything. Think of congregational use but also of community use.

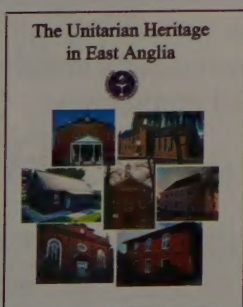
During the first half of 2010 professional advice was sought. The three Trusts merged; Bedfield Chapel was closed and put on the market and Sheila’s wish list given to an architect to work up into a scheme. The resulting scheme was approved by the Trustees and planning permission and listed building consent obtained. Treasurer John McEwan did some big sums, grants were applied for and the scheme put out to tender. In September 2010 a contractor was appointed, the congregation moved out to a temporary meeting place and work commenced immediately. Six months later the congregation was able to move back, albeit into a not quite completed building. And on Sunday 8 May, with works complete, a service was held to celebrate this Grade II* listed building whose future is now secured.



Clockwise from top left: The Framlingham Meeting House, the night before the celebratory service. Framlingham Minister, the Rev Cliff Reed, addresses a standing-room-only crowd, which included the denomination’s Chief Officer Derek McAuley. Sheila Seal, whose ideas helped shape the project, addressed the congregation. (l-r) Framlingham Lay Pastor Ray Seal, the Rev Cliff Reed and John McEwan, treasurer of the trust and member of the Framlingham congregation, greeted open house visitors. Photos by Giles Croucher

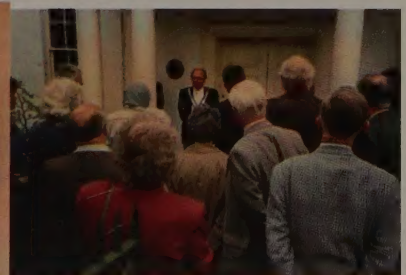
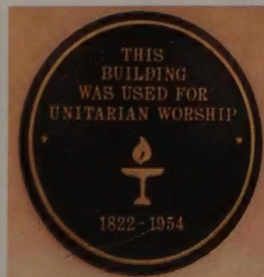


Union re-issues East Anglia heritage book



The Eastern Union revised and updated *The Unitarian Heritage in East Anglia* booklet which covers the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex and Cambridgeshire. The guide offers a brief description of East Anglia’s Unitarian places of worship and their history, and also introduces a few of the figures who have contributed to the Unitarian story in the region – and

beyond. For a copy, please send £2 (postage included) to: Rod Voegeli, 25 Dyers Yard, Norwich NR3 3QY



Rev Cliff Reed, minister of Ipswich Unitarian Meeting House, unveils a plaque in 1997 at the former Unitarian Chapel in Diss, Norfolk.

Edna lends a helping hand

By Fiona Lees

During 2010 Edna Anderson received two certificates acknowledging her 40 years of voluntary service with the League of Friends of the University Hospital of North Tees. One from Pamela Morton OBE, the chairman of Attend, (formerly the National Association of League of Hospital Friends), was presented at a special luncheon at Darlington Memorial Hospital, and the second from the University Hospital of North Tees.

Edna is a fourth-generation Unitarian, to whom helping others is second nature. She was christened at Stockton Unitarian Church in 1932. She has served the Unitarian cause in Stockton as a Sunday school teacher, choir member, committee member and chair, lay preacher, Women's League chair and has been the planned-giving/envelope steward for 50 years. In 1982/83 she followed in the footsteps of her father, Stan Lees as National President of the Lay Preachers Association. She was also National President of the Unitarian Woman's League (1993/94)

It was following an operation in 1968 that Edna became aware of the work of the Hospital League of Friends and began her long association with them. She was invited to join the committee in 1970 and was appointed secretary/organiser in 1975.

The League members staff the coffee bar in the Outpatients Department at the University Hospital of North Tees. Edna is responsible for the coffee bar. This entails organising the training of the volunteers and making sure that the staffing rota operates smoothly. Often when the volunteers were ill or unable to work Edna would go to the coffee bar and work extra shifts. She is also responsible for stocking the coffee bar which, until recently, meant going to the local cash and carry warehouses and collecting the stock. Fortunately she has been able to negotiate with one of them for her to place the order by phone and have it delivered at special rates.

She deals with all the administrative work of the League. Although this is now mainly the coffee bar, in the past before Health and Safety Regulations curtailed activities, she organised summer fetes (a massive operation), winter fairs and taking the library/confectionery trolley around the wards.



Edna Anderson (centre) received a certificate acknowledging 40 years of service from Pamela Morton OBE.

The money raised by the League of Friends is used for the benefit of patients, hospital departments and outreach groups who submit their requests to Edna who processes them. These requests arrive regularly and have recently included the equipping of a 'Birthroom'. They range from large donations for larger equipment to providing toys for the children's department or slippers and Christmas gifts for community and outreach centres.

Through her work for the League of Friends Edna was nominated for Stockton Voluntary Services Council and was appointed onto its committee at its inaugural meeting. Edna served on the committee until it had to cease due to withdrawal of funding. Her work here involved working with community groups and as a Health and Safety representative.

Edna is also a member of the Stockton Branch of the Women's World Day of Prayer and a member of the Townswomen's Guild. She has been a member of a concert party that entertained Senior Citizens, church and voluntary groups. Whilst working at the Gas Board she was secretary of the social club organising events for the workforce.

Even though in September of 2010 she had a knee replacement operation and was not very mobile, she continued with her organisation of the hospital coffee bar. Her caring nature was also shown just after she came out of hospital when a friend she had known through Sunday school and church died.

She immediately phoned his wife to offer condolences. Edna was asked if she would be well enough to conduct the funeral service as she had done for other family members. Edna insisted, much to the relief of the family, that even though the service would be held at Newcastle Crematorium, some 30 miles away and would be the first time she had been out since the operation she would conduct the service even if she had to be wheeled in a wheelchair. All of these activities have been voluntary and Edna has always been there to lend a helping hand to anybody in need.

Helping Hands

In this series we shall focus on just a few of the volunteers who are demonstrating the social responsibility that is one of the threads of Unitarianism. To suggest a volunteer's story, contact Kate Taylor on: kate@airtime.co.uk



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